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SITES IN PHILISTIA

During the next two days we visited nineteen villages in the Philistine plain, combing them for evidence of antiquity. As a result of our investigation it appears certain that the ancient Ekron lay at Qatra, instead of at 'Aqir, which preserves the name, but lies three miles to the northwest. The usual identification of Qatra with Kedron, a fortress built by the Syrian general Cendebaeus, in his war against the Jews, is demonstrably incorrect. At 'Aqir there are no antiquities, and not the sign of a mound anywhere; at Qatra there are marble pillars, the fragment of an inscription, and an important tell, with enormous masses of Græco-Roman pottery. This localization also agrees much better with the statements in the Onomasticon of Eusebius, that Accaron (Ekron) lay to the east of the road from Ashdod to Jamnia. In the Director's opinion, Qatra is a most promising place for excavation, the site of one of the most important Philistine cities, whose relations with Israel were always close, because of its position. Esdûd, ancient Ashdod, is another very promising site, since the mound of the citadel is occupied only on its southern and western slopes, leaving the higher and more extensive portions accessible to the spade. The expense of excavation here would be incomparably less than Ashkelon, since the extent of the mound is so much smaller, the ancient remains are much nearer the surface, and a railway station on the line from Haifâ to Egypt is only half an hour away. Besides, there is an abundance of cheap labor conveniently at hand.

LIBNAH AND GATH

The last day was devoted to the region between Tell-eş-şâfi and Bethlehem. It is almost a pity that Tell-eş-şâfi was excavated, since the portions of the ancient site available for the excavator are so very small, and the meagerness of the results obtained has greatly dampened the ardor of the archæologist, so far as Palestinian investigation is concerned. It appears, moreover, certain, as will be shown in detail in a spécial paper, that Tell-eş-şâfi is the site of ancient Libnah, and that Gath is to be identified with the splendid mound of 'Arâq le-menshîyeh, eight miles to the southwest. Unfortunately, the latter tell has a well on its summit, but this would not interfere with the sinking of trial trenches, which could be done at very slight expense, especially since the value of the ground here is negligible. In connection with Tell-eş-şâfi, it may be mentioned that there are three fragments of a small limestone stele from this site in the national museum (installed in the same building as our library) which, in the Director's opinion, was a sculptor's study, representing the launching of a ship under the auspices of Sennacherib. Since the first publication of this interesting monument is not accurate, it will be republished, and the reasons for the interpretation and dating set forth. It is especially interesting in connection with the fact that Sennacherib occupied Libnah after the fall of Lachish.

MAKKEDAH AND SHOCOH

From Tell-eş-şâfi, we went to Deir-ed-dibbân, which may be tentatively identified with Makkedah. The remarkable caverns here, used in Græco-Roman times as burial places, in Byzantine days as churches, and in at least one case as a mosque by the Saracens, were carefully examined